



Billing Code: 4310-MR-P

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

#### Central Planning Area Lease Sales 241 and 247, and Eastern Planning Area Lease Sale 226

#### MMAA 104000

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**SUMMARY:** Consistent with the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*) (NEPA), BOEM is announcing its intent to prepare a Supplemental EIS for proposed Central Planning Area (CPA) Lease Sales 241 and 247, and Eastern Planning Area (EPA) Lease Sale 226 in the Gulf of Mexico (CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS). Proposed Lease Sale 241 is the next proposed lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico's CPA off the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Proposed Lease Sale 226 is the next proposed lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico's EPA off the States of Alabama and Florida. The CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS will update the environmental and socioeconomic analyses in the *Gulf of Mexico OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales: 2012-2017; Western Planning Area Lease Sales 229, 233, 238, 246, and 248; Central Planning Area Lease Sales 227, 231, 235, 241, and 247, Final Environmental Impact Statement* (OCS EIS/EA BOEM 2012-019) (2012-2017 WPA/CPA Multisale EIS); *Gulf of Mexico OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales: 2013-2014; Western Planning Area Lease Sale 233; Central Planning Area Lease Sale 231, Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (OCS EIS/EA BOEM 2013-0118) (WPA 233/CPA 231 Supplemental EIS); and *Gulf of Mexico OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales: 2015-*

*2017; Central Planning Area Lease Sales 235, 241, and 247, Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (OCS EIS/EA BOEM 2014-010) (CPA 235, 241, and 247 Supplemental EIS). The 2012-2017 WPA/CPA Multisale EIS was completed in July 2012. The WPA 233/CPA 231 Supplemental EIS was completed in April 2013. The CPA 235, 241, and 247 Final Supplemental EIS was completed in March 2014. The CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS will also update the environmental and socioeconomic analyses in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program: 2012-2017; Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (OCS EIS/EA BOEM 2012-030) (Five-Year Program EIS) and *Gulf of Mexico OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales: 2014 and 2016; Eastern Planning Area Lease Sales 225 and 226, Final Environmental Impact Statement* (OCS EIS/EA BOEM 2013-200) (EPA 225/226 EIS). The Five-Year Program EIS was completed in July 2012. The EPA 225/226 EIS was completed in October 2013.

A Supplemental EIS is deemed appropriate to supplement the NEPA documents cited above for the proposed lease sales in order to consider new circumstances and information arising from, among other things, the *Deepwater Horizon* explosion, oil spill, and response. The CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS analysis will focus on updating the baseline conditions.

The CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS analysis will focus on any new information on the potential environmental effects of oil and natural gas leasing, exploration, development, and production in the CPA and EPA identified through the Area Identification procedure as the proposed lease sale areas. In addition to the no action alternative (i.e., canceling a proposed lease sale), other alternatives may be considered for the proposed CPA and EPA lease sales, such as deferring certain areas from the proposed lease sale areas.

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:** On August 27, 2012, the Secretary of the Interior approved as final the *Proposed Final OCS Oil & Gas Leasing Program: 2012-2017* (Five-Year Program). The Five-Year Program includes the two remaining CPA lease sales (Lease Sales 241 and 247) and the remaining EPA lease sale (Lease Sale 226) that will be considered in the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS. Proposed CPA Lease Sale 241 and EPA Lease Sale 226 are tentatively scheduled to be held in 2016, and proposed CPA Lease Sale 247 is tentatively scheduled to be held in 2017. The proposed CPA lease sale area encompasses about 63 million acres of the total CPA area of 66.45 million acres (excluding whole and partial blocks deferred by the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 and blocks that are adjacent to or beyond the United States' Exclusive Economic Zone in the area known as the northern portion of the Eastern Gap). The proposed EPA lease sale area covers approximately 657,905 acres and includes those blocks previously included in the EPA Lease Sales 224 and 225 Area and a triangular-shaped area south of this area bordered by the CPA boundary on the west and the Military Mission Line (86°41'W. longitude) on the east. The area is south of eastern Alabama and western Florida; the nearest point of land is 125 miles (201 kilometers) northwest in Louisiana.

This *Federal Register* notice is not an announcement to hold a proposed lease sale, but it is a continuation of information gathering and is published early in the environmental review process in furtherance of the goals of NEPA. The comments received during the scoping comment period will help form the content of the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS and will be summarized in presale documentation prepared during the decisionmaking process for CPA Lease Sale 241 and EPA Lease Sale 226. If, after completion of the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS, the Secretary of the Interior decides to hold the lease sales, then

the lease sale areas identified in the final Notices of Sale may exclude or defer certain lease blocks from the area offered. However, for purposes of the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS and to adequately assess the potential impacts of an areawide lease sale, BOEM is assuming that all unleased blocks may be offered in proposed CPA Lease Sale 241 and EPA Lease Sale 226, and in the remaining proposed CPA Lease Sale 247, which is tentatively scheduled to be held in 2017.

In order to ensure a greater level of transparency during the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) stages and tiered NEPA processes of the Five-Year Program, BOEM established an alternative and mitigation tracking table, which is designed to track the receipt and treatment of alternative and mitigation suggestions. Section 4.3.2 of the Five-Year Program EIS presented a list of deferral and alternative requests that were received during the development of the Five-Year Program EIS, but they were determined to be more appropriately considered at subsequent OCSLA and NEPA stages. These deferral and alternative requests were previously addressed in the 2012-2017 WPA/CPA Multisale, EPA 225/226 EIS, and other supplemental EIS documents for these planning areas and were deemed inappropriate for further analysis at the time. In this and future NEPA analyses, BOEM will continue to evaluate whether these or other deferral or alternative requests warrant additional consideration as appropriate. A key principle at each stage in the NEPA process is to identify how the recommendations for deferral and mitigation requests are being addressed and whether new information or circumstances favor new or different analytical approaches in response to these requests.

**SCOPING PROCESS:** This NOI also serves to announce the scoping process for identifying issues for the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS. Throughout the scoping process, Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments and the general public have the opportunity to help

BOEM determine significant resources and issues, impacting factors, reasonable alternatives, and potential mitigation measures to be analyzed in the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226

Supplemental EIS. BOEM will also use the NEPA commenting process to initiate the Section 106 consultation process of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 470f), as provided for in 36 CFR § 800.2(d)(3).

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA, BOEM will hold public scoping meetings in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida on the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS. The purpose of these meetings is to solicit comments on the scope of the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS. BOEM's scoping meetings will be held at the following places and times:

- **Panama City, Florida:** Tuesday, July 8, 2014, Hilton Garden Inn Panama City, 1101 US Highway 231, Panama City, Florida, 32405, two meetings, the first beginning at 1:00 p.m. CDT and the second beginning at 6:00 p.m. CDT;
- **Mobile, Alabama:** Wednesday, July 9, 2014, Hilton Garden Inn Mobile West, 828 West I-65 Service Road South, Mobile, Alabama 36609, two meetings, the first beginning at 1:00 p.m. CDT and the second beginning at 6:00 p.m. CDT;
- **Gulfport, Mississippi:** Thursday, July 10, 2014, Courtyard Marriott, Gulfport Beachfront, 1600 East Beach Boulevard, Gulfport, Mississippi 39501, two meetings, the first beginning at 1:00 p.m. CDT and the second beginning at 6:00 p.m. CDT;
- **New Orleans, Louisiana:** Monday, July 14, 2014, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard,

New Orleans, Louisiana 70123, one meeting beginning at 1:00 p.m. CDT;  
and

- **Larose, Louisiana:** Monday, July 14, 2014, Larose Regional Park and Civic Center, 307 E 5th Street, Larose, Louisiana 70373, one meeting beginning at 6:00 p.m. CDT.

**COOPERATING AGENCY:** BOEM invites other Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments to consider becoming cooperating agencies in the preparation of the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS. We invite qualified government entities to inquire about cooperating agency status for the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS. Following the guidelines from the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), qualified agencies and governments are those with “jurisdiction by law or special expertise.” Potential cooperating agencies should consider their authority and capacity to assume the responsibilities of a cooperating agency, and remember that an agency’s role in the environmental analysis neither enlarges nor diminishes the final decisionmaking authority of any other agency involved in the NEPA process. Upon request, BOEM will provide potential cooperating agencies with a written summary of ground rules for cooperating agencies, including time schedules and critical action dates, milestones, responsibilities, scope and detail of cooperating agencies’ contributions, and availability of predecisional information. BOEM anticipates this summary will form the basis for a Memorandum of Agreement between BOEM and any cooperating agency. Agencies should also consider the “Factors for Determining Cooperating Agency Status” in Attachment 1 to CEQ’s January 30, 2002, Memorandum for the Heads of Federal Agencies: *Cooperating Agencies in Implementing the Procedural Requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act*. These documents are available at the following locations

on the Internet: <http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/cooperating/cooperatingagenciesmemorandum.html>; and <http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/cooperating/cooperatingagencymemofactors.html>.

BOEM, as the lead agency, will not provide financial assistance to cooperating agencies. Even if an organization is not a cooperating agency, opportunities will exist to provide information and comments to BOEM during the normal public input stages of the NEPA/EIS process. For further information about cooperating agencies, please contact Mr. Gary D. Goeke at 504-736-3233.

**COMMENTS:** All interested parties, including Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments, and other interested parties, may submit written comments on the scope of the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS, significant issues that should be addressed, alternatives that should be considered, potential mitigation measures, and the types of oil and gas activities of interest in the proposed CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 lease sale areas.

Written scoping comments may be submitted in one of the following ways:

1. In an envelope labeled “Scoping Comments for the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS” and mailed (or hand delivered) to Mr. Gary D. Goeke, Chief, Environmental Assessment Section, Office of Environment (GM 623E), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394;
2. Through the regulations.gov web portal: Navigate to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for “Oil and Gas Lease Sales: Gulf of Mexico, Outer Continental Shelf; Central Planning Area Lease Sales 241 and 247/Eastern Planning Area Lease Sale 226”. (Note: It is important to include the quotation marks in your search terms.) Click on the

“Comment Now!” button to the right of the document link. Enter your information and comment, then click “Submit”; or

3. BOEM’s email address: [cpa241-epa226@boem.gov](mailto:cpa241-epa226@boem.gov).

Petitions, although accepted, do not generally provide useful information to assist in the development of alternatives, resources, and issues to be analyzed, or impacting factors. BOEM does not consider anonymous comments; please include your name and address as part of your submittal. BOEM makes all comments, including the names and addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that BOEM withhold their names and/or addresses from the public record; however, BOEM cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. If you wish your name and/or address to be withheld, you must state your preference prominently at the beginning of your comment. All submissions from organizations or businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

**DATES:** Comments should be submitted by [PLEASE INSERT DATE THAT WILL BE 30 DAYS FROM THE PUBLICATION OF THIS NOTICE IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*] to the address specified above.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For information on the CPA 241 and 247/EPA 226 Supplemental EIS, the submission of comments, or BOEM’s policies associated with this notice, please contact Mr. Gary D. Goeke, Chief, Environmental Assessment Section, Office of Environment (GM 623E), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394, telephone 504-736-3233.



**AUTHORITY:** This NOI is published pursuant to the regulations (40 CFR § 1501.7) implementing the provisions of NEPA.

Dated: May 30, 2014,\_\_\_\_  
Walter D. Cruickshank.  
Acting Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management/

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